

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00183 011059Z

53

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 SAM-01 SAB-01

DRC-01 /132 W

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R 300800Z MAR 74

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 867

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 183

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IZ

SUBJECT: KURDISH AUTONOMY

1. LOCAL COVERAGE OF KURDISH ISSUE MAINLY LIMITED TO MESSAGES OF SUPPORT AND PRAISE FOR KURDISH AUTONOMY LAW. AAPSO CONFERENCE RESOLUTION ALLEGED "IMPERIALISTS AND ESPECIALLY AMERICANS" TRYING TO OBSTRUCT AUTONOMY "IN ORDER TO TOPPLE PROGRESSIVE REGIME IN IRAQ" BUT PRESS HAS BEEN RESTRAINED ABOUT ACCUSING FOREIGNERS OF SUPPORTING KURDS. BRITISH MILATT TOLD ME GOI MINDEF LIASON OFFICER FOR ATTACHES, CAPTAIN TAHIR, WAS HOWEVER CONVINCED USG AIDING KURDS, ALTHOUGH HE OFFERED NO EVIDENCE. KURDISH RADIO FROM UNKNOWN SOURCE NOW BEING HEARD CLEARLY IN BAGHDAD. KURDISH EMPLOYEES OF USINT SAY BARZANI SPOKE EVENING OF MARCH 29 AND WARNED GOI AGAINST LAUNCHING AN OFFENSIVE.

2. SEVERAL SOURCES SAY THAT SECRET NEGOTIATIONS STILL GOING ON BETWEEN GOI AND KDP AND EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR
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PAGE 02 BAGHDA 00183 011059Z

NAGGAR TOLD ME ARMY UNDER INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO TAKE ANY

OFFENSIVE ACTION. MOST OMINOUS RUMORS CONCERN PRESENCE OF FORMER IRAQI POLITICAL LEADERS AT BARZANI HDQS INCLUDING FORMER PRESIDENT ABDUL RAHMAN AREF, FORMER PM COLONEL ABDUL RAZZAK AL-NAYIF AND A FORMER GENERAL AR-RAWI. PRESENCE OF SUCH FIGURES WOULD OF COURSE BE SEEN BY BAATH AS PRELUDE TO ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW REGIME.

3. DESPITE DOONSDAY RUMORS, THERE ARE ALSO SOME HOPEFUL SAIGNS. NEITHER SIDE HAS TAKEN ANY IRREVOCABLE STEP. NEW GOVT INSTALLED EDITOR OF KDP AT-TAAXHI IS NOT YET ATTACKING BARZANI. SOVIETS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SENT STRONG MESSAGE TO BARZANI URGING THAT HE ACCEPT AUTONOMY PLAN. FINALLY, EGYPTIAN AMB NAGGAR TOLD ME THAT SECRET IRAQI DEL IS ABOUT TO DEPART FOR TEHRAN TO NEGOTIATE WITH IRAN ON KURDISH CONFLICT AND OTHER MATTERS.

4. COMMENT: IF NO ACCORD REACHED, OUTLOOK STILL IS THAT GOI WILL ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE AND WEAKEN BARZANI THROUGH COMBINATION OF MILITARY, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES. FULL SCALE MILITARY OFFENSIVE WOULD BE ADMISSION BY SADDAM HUSSEIN THAT HIS KURDISH POLICY HAD FAILED AND HE UNLIKELY TO DO THAT EXCEPT AS LAST RESORT. IF EGYPTIAN REPORT OF IMMINENT IRAQI-IRANIAN NEGOTIATIONS IS TRUE, THERE MAY BE SOME POSSIBILITY OF TRADE OFF WITH IRAQ CEASING ITS EFFORTS TO STIR UP GULF ARABS AGAINST IRAN IN RETURN FOR IRANIAN POLICY OF HANDS OFF KURDS. LOWRIE

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